

# New Beginnings – A Home for Mothers

The Last Ten Years (1996-2006) with a focus on the ministries of Mr. Craig and Judith Schwartz  
and Reverend Douglas and Charlene Bode

Nathanael R. Scharf  
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Professor James F. Korthals  
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Jesus asked, “Will you give me a drink?”<sup>1</sup> In chapter 4 of his Gospel, John records Jesus’ interaction with a Samaritan Woman by Jacob’s Well in Sychar. With a simple request to fill a physiological need Jesus opened the door to an opportunity. Jesus was able to share the Gospel with a woman who knew all too well that “Jews do not associate with Samaritans.”<sup>2</sup> Jesus gave a Samaritan woman living water, which she shared with the people of her town. Jesus stayed with the people of that town for two days. “And because of his words many more became believers.”<sup>3</sup> And this all started with a simple request, a bridge, so to speak, that Jesus used to bring one woman and a town his life saving message. Pastor Robert Fleischmann<sup>4</sup> said that what Jesus did here is an example of a bridge ministry. A bridge ministry is a ministry that uses life and family issues as bridges to convey the love of God in Jesus Christ.<sup>5</sup> *New Beginnings: A Home for Mothers* is a bridge ministry. It follows in the footsteps of the greatest minister and his paradigm for ministry in John chapter 4.

*New Beginnings* is a home where God’s servants have the opportunity to speak with new mothers and mothers-to-be about their eternal home. *New Beginnings* is located in the metro area of Denver, Colorado. *New Beginnings* is in its 13<sup>th</sup> year of operation. It began as an idea in 1990, and its first resident entered in October of 1993. This year, 2006, marks the beginning of the teenage years for *New Beginnings* and more importantly the teenage years of the first baby to enter *New Beginnings*. This paper respectfully builds off of the sound work done by Pastor Jeffrey A. Bonack in his Senior Church History Paper: *New Beginnings – A Home for Mothers: from conception through its early years*. His paper focused on the preparatory work for *New*

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<sup>1</sup> John 4:7. *The Holy Bible: New International Version*. 1996, c1984. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

<sup>2</sup> John 4:9. NIV

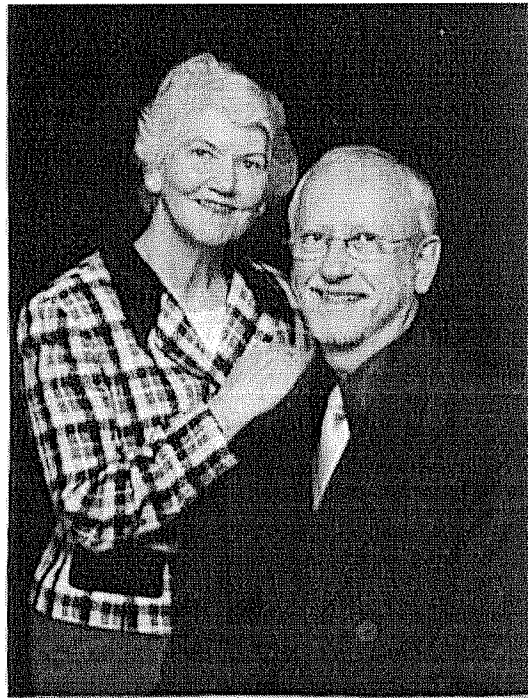
<sup>3</sup> John 4:41. NIV

<sup>4</sup> Pastor Robert Fleischmann is director of Christian Life Resources. *New Beginnings* is a ministry of Christian Life Resources, Inc.

<sup>5</sup> Definition given by Pastor Fleischmann in an interview.

*Beginnings* and the first 3 years of operation under the house parents Craig and Judy Schwartz. This paper, *New Beginnings – A Home for Mothers: The Last Ten Years (1996 – 2006)*, picks up where Pastor Bonack left off. This paper gives the history of *New Beginnings* from 1996 to 2006 and does by focusing in on the ministries of the house parents of *New Beginnings*: Mr. Craig and Judy Schwartz and Rev. Doug and Charlene Bode.

### **Mr. Craig and Judy Schwartz: The First House Parents:<sup>6</sup>**



Craig and Judy Schwartz were the first house parents of *New Beginnings*. Craig had a background in teaching. He taught at public schools in Almond and Eau Claire, Wisconsin. He also taught at Lakeside Lutheran High School in Lake Mills, Wisconsin for 19 years, where he

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<sup>6</sup> The information contained in this section is taken from a survey and interview with the Schwartz's in the Fall of 2006. Direct quotes will be marked by quotation marks. Information taken from other sources will be marked accordingly in the footnotes. The Schwartz's sent the picture electronically to be used for this paper. Judy is short for Judith.

was serving when he and Judy received the divine calls<sup>7</sup> to *New Beginnings*. Judy's background was in raising children and volunteering for the WELS Lutherans for Life Pregnancy Counseling Center in Madison, Wisconsin.

Craig and Judy gained valuable experiences in life which they brought with them to the ministry at *New Beginnings*. As a teacher Craig was used to teaching and dealing with 150 high school students each year at Lakeside Lutheran High School. Judy and Craig gained invaluable experience in raising four children of their own and their adopted son. Besides their adopted son, Craig and Judy also fostered a 15 year-old boy for seven months. Through this experience they became wiser to the ways a person can manipulate those who are in charge. Craig and Judy arrived at *New Beginnings* fully expecting the home to be "a slam-dunk."<sup>8</sup> They felt that God had prepared them with life experiences that they could use in the ministry of *New Beginnings*. The Lord gave life experiences and equipped the Schwartzes to carry out their ministries.

They and *New Beginnings* began this ministry in nine units of one wing of a 400-unit apartment building. A WELS member in the Denver area owned this building. His charge for renting the apartments that *New Beginnings* used made the whole operation very feasible for Lutherans for Life (now known as Christian Life Resources, Inc.). Pastor Bonack covered much of this background and more in his paper on *New Beginnings*. It will suffice to say that Craig and Judy spent most of their time at the apartment building. Relief staff was available when the house parents grew stir-crazy. And as far as Craig and Judy's family are concerned, this meant that their children and relatives came to Denver for holiday celebrations.

One thing about housing arrangements needs to be mentioned here. It is something that has changed and that was stressed as *New Beginnings* grew. When Craig and Judy came to *New*

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<sup>7</sup> *New Beginnings* issues two calls, one for the husband and one for the wife.

<sup>8</sup> This biographical information of the last two paragraphs is taken from Pastor Bonack's Paper as well as the survey which Craig and Judy completed for the writing of this paper. This direct quote is from the survey.

*Beginnings*, the plan was that they would stay at their apartment, living near the mothers at all times. Even when relief staff was there, Craig and Judy lived on the same floor as the mothers. Full time/regular relief staff didn't arrive until a year after *New Beginnings* had started. This around the clock lifestyle was difficult. Being "on call" all the time very easily led to frustration and stress. After being at *New Beginnings* two years, Craig and Judy bought a home just a little ways from the apartment building. This became a much needed respite for the house parents, even if it was just for a few hours a day to pick up the mail and be away from everything that went on at the *New Beginnings*. In 2000, when Craig and Judy were retiring, they encouraged the Bodes to buy or keep a house in the Denver area when they accepted the call to *New Beginnings*. There was definitely wisdom in having a place to go to get away. And as the Schwartzes said, "Our home usually became the hotel for people visiting us."

The Goals that Craig and Judy shared with *New Beginnings* was to "share Jesus, teach parenting and respect for their children as gifts from God, and also to move the residents along in their formal education with each resident individually at a pace that would put them in a better position for this life and focused on heaven before they left *New Beginnings*." Craig and Judy moved the residents toward these goals by trying to create an atmosphere in which the joys and sorrows of a resident would be shared by the other residents and house parents alike. And there were plenty of joys and sorrows as each resident progressed in gaining skills that she would need to raise her child, make a home and supply the needs of that household. And most importantly they encouraged each resident to point herself and her child to their Savior Jesus Christ for strength and comfort.

In an article Craig wrote for the Summer 2000 edition of *Growing Branches*<sup>9</sup>, Craig stated the mission of *New Beginnings* rather well,

Being physically homeless on this earth is not the end of the world, but another type of homelessness is. That type of homelessness finds some of the residents with no eternal home in their future. They come to us not knowing that a loving God sent His only Son to redeem us for eternity in heaven. Being homeless for eternity is a pretty scary thing. Our mission becomes one of reminding them [the residents] that Jesus is always there for them during this life, too. They believe in the certainty of eternal life, but are struggling with how to handle today. But, if they don't know they are homeless for eternity, so what? So what if they only have things for this life and are content simply to find housing and physical provisions for their children? Then, is that enough? If that were the end of *New Beginnings*' mission, we would best use our God-given resources for some other mission, because the need of providing housing to them could easily be met by most any social service-oriented agency. Our mission extends, by God's grace, to include a home for eternity. The neatest part of our counseling and verbal interaction is the opportunity God extends to us when we get to share His message.<sup>10</sup>

Craig and Judy became more and more comfortable in this new ministry as they gained confidence in what they were doing. Pastor Fleischmann and Tom Frey, both members on the board for *New Beginnings* worked in close contact with Craig and Judy. Pastor Fleischmann and Mr. Frey gave the Schwartzes a lot of trust and understanding as they eased into the position. Their relationship with Pastor Fleischmann and Tom Frey was "very harmonious." Craig and Judy also appreciated different seminars they went to pertaining to the issues and situations they were dealing with at *New Beginnings*. The farthest and longest time they spent at one of these seminars was for a week in Pennsylvania learning from the nation's best about parenting in a

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<sup>9</sup> *Growing Branches* is the quarterly newsletter that the house parents of *New Beginnings* send out.

<sup>10</sup> Schwartz, Craig and Judy. *Growing Branches*. Update from *New Beginnings – A Home for Mothers*. Summer 2000. p. 2.

place like *New Beginnings*. They also had learning sessions with the local AFDC<sup>11</sup> authorities and with the local police from time to time.

From October, 1993 there was a steady flow of mothers and mothers-to-be coming to *New Beginnings*. Sometimes *New Beginnings* would be at capacity (six girls), and sometimes not. The mothers came from all over. Many came from the Denver area, others from longer distances and different states. Potential residents interviewed with the House Parents either over the phone, at *New Beginnings*, or with a local pastor where they lived. The girls could also interview with a counselor at a counseling center in their area. The girls also had to fill out an application form and get a physical. The applications included questions concerning their financial situation, their educational goals, the behavioral expectations of *New Beginnings*, and the consequences involved in failure to follow the rules of *New Beginnings*.

In the interviewing process there was also the opportunity to ask about the girl's spiritual situation. Craig spoke about this very thing in the same article as was quoted earlier from *Growing Branches*, "Many times when a potential resident phones, the conversation will head in a direction that will enable us to ask her if she thinks she would go to heaven when she died."<sup>12</sup> The mission of *New Beginnings* as a bridge ministry was always clear even in the application process. Take the opportunities God gives!

At *New Beginnings* there was, as much as possible, a daily and weekly routine, though in reality no two days would really be alike. The mothers would have a lot of freedom throughout their day. They could use this time to go to work, to attend school, to spend time with their babies, to go to meetings with the AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependant Children). But there were some requirements placed on the residents. Judy would have a scheduled hour-long

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<sup>11</sup> AFDC = Aid to Families with Dependant Children

<sup>12</sup> Schwartz, Craig and Judy. *Growing Branches*. Update from *New Beginnings – A Home for Mothers*. Summer 2000. p. 2.

meeting with each girl individually each week. This meeting would include “procedures for heading up a household and living with a purpose,” as well as Christian living and social relationships. Also each day there would be a family supper. This type of thing was very important for the residents. Pastor Fleischmann pointed out in an interview that the vision of *New Beginnings* included house parents who could “model a Christian marriage.” Part of this situation included modeling Christianity in things that families do regularly, such as eating together, and having regular prayers before and devotions at supper time. Many of the girls appreciated this opportunity as it gave them time to interact with each other and experience a family dinner. The residents would take turns cooking meals. They would cook the meal in their own apartment (due to regulations concerning restaurant laws, etc.) sometimes getting advice and help from their house parent, Judy. The girls would meet together at a time designated between 5 and 6 in the evening. They would gather in one of the empty apartments or in the apartment of Craig and Judy.

Some dinners were great, others were a learning experience. The Bodes included in their survey a story which the Schwartzes had told them about one of the dinners. A girl was making meat loaf, and instead of putting a teaspoon of salt into the meat loaf recipe, she put a cup in. Pastor Bode wrote, “The meat loaf crystallized!”

After each dinner, there was devotion time. This could include a lesson from Bible History or a lesson applying the bible to practical Christian issues, etc. After Saturday night devotions, the girls would be given Bible study homework for the coming week. Craig would meet with each girl individually each week to go through a Bible study worksheet which had been handed out after dinner. Each girl came with their own individual issues, their own level of



spirituality and knowledge of the Bible. This one-on-one approach allowed Craig to meet the resident where they were at with God's Word.

The evening, after dinner, might include a type of workshop. This could be one of the house parents, or a guest speaker. For example someone from a WELS congregation with a specialized background in dental hygiene, child care, child C.P.R., etc. would present for an hour or so and help the mothers in raising their babies by giving them practical information. The house mother would also lead many of these sessions. After devotion or after these presentations the residents had social time, or quiet time. At *New Beginnings* there was a Commons area with computers, telephones, and television available until bed time.

One of the challenges Craig and Judy experienced while at *New Beginnings* was that the women came from all different backgrounds; each was unique. This provided some additional challenges, as well as opportunities for learning on both sides. Sometimes the girls had a "welfare mentality" always wondering what was in it for them. The girls had been "burned" many times in their lives and had trust issues. One individual challenge that became quickly apparent for Craig, as a man living among so many women, was, as he put it, "Well, a man is a man and a woman can look past your façade and see you as you really are from your actions, what you say and how you respond." This was definitely an interesting challenge. Something that Judy stated as a challenge particular to the house mother was "As a woman, there was a feeling of being inferior to the resident. After all, many of the residents were streetwise and had lived an adventurous life...compared to the housemother. If they didn't think that way, they came off that way, many times."<sup>13</sup> Also many times the house parents became easy scapegoats for the girls to blame their problems on and also people on whom they could take out their

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<sup>13</sup> In this section the writer appreciates the honesty which both Craig and Judy afforded in sharing their challenges and struggles they faced as house parents in a unique role and ministry. This information is taken from the survey they completed.

frustrations. One of the challenges somewhat unique to this dual call ministry that Craig and Judy mentioned was that working so closely together as a team was frustrating at first. They quickly learned how to get along though and work together.

The joys of their work were readily apparent and can be seen from many of the articles of *Growing Branches*. The joys were seeing changes in the residents of *New Beginnings*; the visible work of the Holy Spirit through the Word. One of the articles of *Growing Branches* contained the story of Sharon, a resident at *New Beginnings* during the Schwartzes' time there. It will suffice to let her do the talking,

“I applied to live at NEW BEGINNINGS. We were living in a shelter at the time and looking for that new start in life...With the help of Bible studies and meal devotions I have come to understand the power and the glory of the Lord. My son has been baptized and soon I will be. I remember one Sunday morning I didn't feel like going to church. When Garrett woke up, the first thing he did was raise his hands and say “where's Jesus?” That made me feel guilty and more importantly, grateful for NEW BEGINNINGS for it really was a **new beginning**.... A thank you to each of you for giving Garrett and me our new beginning. God bless you.”

There are many more stories the Schwartzes could tell you. “A welcome joy was when a resident saw the light of God's grace in their lives.” As Craig said in an interview, “All ministry is challenging.” Their ministry at *New Beginnings* was no exception.

One of the things that made Craig and Judy's work a little easier was the move to a new building in 1998. The apartment building they were operating out of since October of 1993 had been sold and the new landlord was going to raise the rent for the residents. The landlord gave *New Beginnings* time to phase out of the apartment building and move to the new location. The last resident of *New Beginnings* moved out of the old location and *New Beginnings* moved into their new home, a 12 unit apartment building in the metro Denver area. It was not as glamorous

as the word “new” sounds. The apartment building that *New Beginnings* purchased was in need of major repairs. The building was purchased for around \$350,000, and *New Beginnings* had to put in 150,000 to refinish it.<sup>14</sup> There had been holes in the doors and other unpleasanties when the Schwartzes arrived. When *New Beginnings* moved in, there were still renters occupying the apartments. Craig recalled that the renters were very cooperative with the situation. *New Beginnings* worked with the renters and gave them notice to vacate when *New Beginnings* began renovating each apartment. With this process the last renter was gone after 10 months. The transition was very smooth for *New Beginnings*.

The first new resident came to the new location in November of 98, just a month or two after *New Beginnings* moved there. She had the pleasure of being in the midst of renovations. There were volunteers from area churches who would volunteer time helping out. Craig, the resident handy man, headed up and supervised the renovation project. Craig supervised the local WELS volunteers. Craig and Judy fondly remember Pastor Kurt Ebert from Abiding Word in Highlands Ranch, Colorado carrying a pink toilet out of New Beginnings. Craig and Judy’s son-in-law, Pastor Jeffrey Bonack, (who incidentally wrote the first paper on New Beginnings) came out and helped put a new kitchen into one of the apartments. One WELS lady, Dona McBee, came to help out every Thursday morning and brought a pie along each time. There were many more volunteers from WELS congregations in the area, as well as professional help to do the much needed renovations, and relieve Craig of some of the larger jobs.

With the new building renovated and all to themselves, *New Beginnings* decided to use six of the apartments for the girls, one for emergency situations (to allow for a seventh resident if need be), one for the House Parents, one for the Relief Staff, one for storage, and a few others to be converted into office space, a family dining room, a TV room, a fitness room, etc. The set-up

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<sup>14</sup> Statistics are taken from the interview with Pastor Fleischmann.

worked fairly well. The security and safety issues were always difficult in the old location because the residents of *New Beginnings* were not the only residents. It was harder to keep track of the girls and their guests.

In the new building though, security codes were given for both entrances, alarms were put on the outside doors, and things were made more secure and safe. There were a few loopholes which some girls found from time to time, but for the most part, security and safety were greatly improved.

With ownership of the building, *New Beginnings* had the privilege of designing and decorating the building as they wished. As the renovations and improvements went on, *New Beginnings* used architecture and decoration as a teaching tool. Even some of the safety features were used. They all point the residents to their Savior Jesus Christ.

For instance, in the tile flooring of the dining room where the residents and house parents meet every evening to eat supper together there is a large cross designed right into the tiling. On the bars which are placed on the windows for the safety of the residents, there are three crosses reminding the residents of the crosses on Calvary where Jesus died for the sins of all. They see them whenever they look out the window. In each girls' living room there is a painting on the wall of Jesus holding little children. Each painting has a caption under it with the words of John 3:16.<sup>15</sup> Every day, the residents are reminded in many ways of the love their Savior has for them. The message of the Savior is clear in the architecture of *New Beginnings*.

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<sup>15</sup> John 3:16 – NIV – “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

Here are a few examples of the architecture and decorations:



The house parents especially appreciated the new building. The added security and the complete control of the building all made life a little easier. There were however a few exceptions. Craig and Judy retell the story of how one evening one of the mothers put a dish towel over a lamp shade to dry. Well, the towel caught on fire. The fire alarm automatically signaled the fire department. The fire department called *New Beginnings* to check and see if they needed to respond. *New Beginnings* didn't answer because the computers at that time were using a dial-up connection. The fire department couldn't get through, so they came with lights and sirens blaring. Craig rushed out of their apartment hoping to stop the firemen from breaking down the front door. The first fireman he met at the door was actually a firewoman. This was an awkward situation for Mr. Schwartz because he had already been in bed and in his haste to get to the door he remained lightly garbed when he met the firewoman.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Mr. Craig Schwartz was alerted to the fact that this story might be recorded in the annals of Church History through this paper. He said it would provide some "light reading."

Not every day was as exciting as this one, but each day had its own joys and challenges. Eventually after seven years of serving as house parents Craig and Judy decided it was time to retire. By December of 2000, the Lord of the church led Pastor Doug and Charlene Bode to accept the calls to be the new house parents of *New Beginnings*. By December, they owned a home in Aurora, Colorado, and had moved into *New Beginnings*.

In the survey for this paper the Schwartzes shared what Bible passages gave them wisdom, encouragement and strength in their years at *New Beginnings*. Genesis 39 (Joseph and Potiphar's wife) reminded them how careful the house parents had to be so that nothing they did could be misconstrued. John 4 (Jesus and the Samaritan woman), John 8:3 (the adulterous woman), John 15:5 (I am the vine, you are the branches). John 15:5 was initially the *New Beginnings* theme verse and it can be seen in the name of *New Beginnings* newsletter: *Growing Branches*. Craig and Judy stressed in their final interview that "It's just nice that there is a place for people to go and hear about their Savior during this stressful time in their lives. Even they don't show a lot of appreciation, Jesus is still presented to them and the Holy Spirit can do the rest." The Schwartzes phased out as the new house parents, Rev. Doug and Charlene Bode transitioned into *New Beginnings*.

## Reverend Doug and Charlene Bode: The Second House Parents<sup>17</sup>



Reverend Doug and Charlene Bode began their ministry as house parents of *New Beginnings* in December of 2000. Doug was a graduate of Northwestern College and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Charlene was a graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College. Charlene taught for three years in Fountain City, Wisconsin – Winona, Minnesota and in Lannon, Wisconsin. After wedding bells rang for Doug and Charlene, Doug pastored congregations in Hutchinson, Minnesota; Denver, Colorado; Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; and Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin. The Lord blessed the Bodes with three children along the way. Doug served as a Pastor for many years, and Charlene had the opportunity to work as a benefits specialist with Crawford County in WI when they were living there. This knowledge of public benefits and government red tape came in handy for Charlene and helped at *New Beginnings*.

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<sup>17</sup> The information in this section was given by the Bode's in a survey they completed and in an interview via telephone in December of 2006. Direct quotes will be signified by quotation marks. Information taken from other sources will be footnoted. Doug is short for Douglas.

When the Bodes received the call to *New Beginnings* “We were floored. We had no prior active involvement in the pro-life movement and could not imagine why we had been chosen to receive the calls.” But the Lord has his ways and the Bodes accepted the calls to *New Beginnings*. “Following our visit to NB prior to accepting the calls, we also had the feeling that, while we could do this, it would be the hardest thing we had ever done in our lives.”

The Bodes arrived in early December. Orientation took place in the time before Christmas. The Schwartzes showed them the places around town they would need to know. They went to the bank, the different public benefits organizations, stores, food pantries, etc. Pastor Bode recalls Craig taking him into the bathroom of one of the apartments at New Beginnings and walking him through, “This is how you fix this...this is how you fix this...this is how you fix this.” The new status of handy man had Doug wishing they had given him “classes at NWC or the seminary on maintenance. ☺.”<sup>18</sup> Craig and Judy showed them how the computers worked, how the pass codes were set and functioned for the doors and alarms. They made them familiar with the database of donors. After a brief orientation period and shadowing of Craig and Judy, the Bodes were on their own for the most part. Lisa Hecht, a social worker, (formerly Lisa Buch), was there as relief staff until May of 2001. She did all the group classes each week which Charlene then took over after Lisa left. The Bodes were off and running on their own as house parents in January of 2001.

The Bodes goal at *New Beginnings* was much the same as the Schwartzes. They sought to help make a difference in the lives of the residents and their families by sharing Jesus with them. The residents at *New Beginnings* were people who often times didn’t know much about Jesus. When asked how the goals or focus changed over the years they served as house parents

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<sup>18</sup> Northwestern College (NWC) is located in Watertown, Wisconsin. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary is in Mequon, Wisconsin. Smiley face his.



at *New Beginnings* the Bodes responded, “You become more realistic and less idealistic about seeing change in the residents’ lives. You realize even more how this is also a ‘seed-planting’ ministry, with the results left up to God.” The Bodes also spoke about how their teaching and day to day activities involved “as Scripture indicates...much patience and carefulness, along with tons of Christian love and forgiveness.”

The Bodes spent a lot of time at *New Beginnings* as the house parents. This was sometimes difficult, especially at first. They were used to a three bedroom parsonage with a finished basement. Their new apartment was a tighter fit to say the least. As far as relief staff went, Lisa Hecht was there for ½ of their first year. Melissa Boehm was there for a year (summer of 2002 to the summer of 2003). Phyllis Frase, a member at Christ Our Redeemer in Aurora, Colorado, helped out more regularly through the years, especially when the Bodes needed to be away for a few days. Also Jerri Merklinger, house mother at Nebraska Lutheran in Waco, Nebraska, helped out over some summers and also at Christmas time. With the retirement of the Bodes, *New Beginnings* (Christian Life Resources) is working at hiring more permanent relief staff for the house parents. Hopes are that a schedule can be worked out with a four days on, four days off, and eight days on, eight days off routine.<sup>19</sup> That would give the house parents a much needed break, and also enable more consistency with the relief staff. All the house parents appreciated the people who served as relief staff. This change would make relief staff more mandatory and more regular. It is a tough and consuming task to parent six new parents 24 hours a day.

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<sup>19</sup> Pastor Fleischmann shared these hopes in his interview.

Speaking of tough tasks, when asked about the challenges that the Bodes experienced while at *New Beginnings*, they replied,<sup>20</sup>

We're dealing mostly with young people from very dysfunctional families who never learned what they should have while growing up. So they have to be taught almost everything. We eat one common meal together each day and some of the girls are not exactly what we would call good cooks. We all must eat the meal and that is sometimes a real challenge! Most residents do not see the need for infant baptism. If anything, they sometimes believe in dedication so we use every opportunity that we have to try to teach them what the Bible says about Baptism.

Another challenge the Bodes experienced was the issue of trust. This was especially true for Pastor Bode. As he put it, "He is a member of the gender that got the residents into trouble, so there is a matter of building up trust. He must always be on guard so that he doesn't do anything that could be misconstrued." There were a few times during the day when Pastor Bode had to be very careful, for example, when doing maintenance in an apartment or sitting down for a one on one Bible Study. Both Doug and Craig seemed to handle this very well.<sup>21</sup> A challenge for Charlene was not so much the trust issue, but the heartbreak and frustration she felt in realizing that many of the girls had never been taught the basics by their mothers. However, there was also great satisfaction for her in being able to teach the girls the basics, such as showing them that they could make applesauce on their own, or that a casserole could be made without hamburger helper.

The joys of the Bodes' ministries are readily apparent when one reads the editions of *Growing Branches*, the newsletter that the house parents write and send out quarterly. One story the Bodes recorded in the August 2004 edition of *Growing Branches* is quite moving,

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<sup>20</sup> In this section the writer appreciates the honesty which both Doug and Charlene had in sharing their challenges and struggles they faced as house parents in the unique role and ministry of New Beginnings.

<sup>21</sup> For more information on the question, "What is like to be the only man in a home with women?" please see the article *one MAN among many women* by Pastor Bode in the August 2006 edition of *Growing Branches*. This is included in the addenda of the Seminary edition of this paper.

Ethan cried. Jonah smiled. Austin wiped away the water. Alicia impassively looked on. But whatever their reaction to the drops of water on their foreheads, all four of them were made children of God and heirs of eternal life in heaven through the washing of Holy Baptism on Palm Sunday earlier this year. What a triumph God the Holy Spirit works in human hearts! What trophies of grace they became through the means of grace by the Holy Spirit! What a faith-working, soul-saving sacrament was bestowed on these young children by our loving God! These children were not baptized just weeks after their birth. In one case it was waiting for the baby's father to attend from almost a thousand miles away. In the other cases it was waiting for the Spirit to work through continued reminders and scriptural witness of the importance and power of the sacrament of Holy Baptism...It often takes time (lots of it) and patience (in abundant measure) to wait for the Holy Spirit to open their eyes to see the truth of God's Word and recognize the importance of Holy Baptism in starting a child out on the right spiritual path in life. For these young mothers Baptism is a good *start*, certainly not the end of that spiritual pilgrimage through life.

These baptisms took place on Palm Sunday, April 4, 2004 and were a mountain top experience for the ministry of *New Beginnings*. Both Pastor Fleischmann and the Bodes mentioned this momentous Sunday. The Bodes also shared additional joys in their survey and interview. One joy they've experienced recently is this: they are currently using a Bible history book that some Lutheran Elementary Schools use to teach the residents Bible stories which many of them have never heard. They use it for after supper devotions. The Bodes remark, "It is a joy to hear them recall the stories and actually seem to enjoy learning about them." In addition to this joy, the Bodes always have great joy in seeing a baby made a child of God in baptism.

Mothers are allowed to stay at *New Beginnings* for up to a year after their babies are born. The longest stay for a resident was 14 months. Some stay for a much shorter time. The average stay is probably around eight to nine months. With both the Schwartzes and the Bodes many girls do not stay in contact, but a few do. The Schwartzes were invited to the birthday parties of one of the babies who had been born while the mother was at *New Beginnings*. The Bodes tell of

a few instances where the girls have kept in touch in some neat ways. Some call for some child rearing advice. Some call to thank them. The Bodes tell this story:

Another girl (who caused lots of problems while she was here) called up the day before Mother's Day and talked and talked. Finally she told Charlene that she bet she was wondering why she called. Charlene told her that she was happy to hear from her but yes, she was wondering why. The girl finally told her that she was calling to thank us for New Beginnings. Said she didn't appreciate it while she was here but had learned so much from being in the program. Also assured us that she was continuing with going to church, etc.

They also speak of a time when one of the girls was taking GED classes to get her high school equivalency certificate. She went from December to May with the encouragements and persistent pushing of her house parents. Then in May, one day she didn't go to class. The house parents confronted her about this. A short time later, she gave Doug and Charlene two envelopes. Inside were her final scores showing she passed her GED tests! She had passed! When she walked across the stage at graduation, the school gave her a special award for overcoming adversity in her life. After the birth of her second child a week later, she enrolled in continued education classes. This was another mountain top experience for the Bodes and *New Beginnings*.<sup>22</sup>

Another mother, one who keeps in fairly regular contact with the Bodes, had her baby while at New Beginnings. At first she was opposed to the church to which the Bodes took her and the other girls on Sundays. A year later, in the same church, she was confirmed, her baby was baptized, and as of the writing of this paper she remains a member of a Wisconsin Synod Church in the Denver area.

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<sup>22</sup> Bode, Doug and Charlene. *Growing Branches*. Update from *New Beginnings – A Home for Mothers*. August, 2003. They also mentioned this story or one similar to it in their survey.

Even though it is a tough situation for the girls and the house parents, God works. His work is not always apparent from a numerical perspective. *New Beginnings* doesn't follow their residents. The only contact the residents have with *New Beginnings* is of their own volition. However, with the entrance of the next two residents, the Bodes will welcome in the 150<sup>th</sup> and 151<sup>st</sup> residents of *New Beginnings*. Those are about the only numbers one can look at. Pastor Fleischmann estimates that *New Beginnings* currently has operating costs of \$150,000 to \$200,000 per year. This ministry comes with a big price tag, but the work that is done of planting seeds of God's grace and giving girls and their babies a *New Beginning* is invaluable.

Some of the things the Bodes have tried to stress while house parents there are the Bible Classes<sup>23</sup>, the devotions, and the child rearing classes. They've shared the importance of singing and reading Bible songs and stories to the children<sup>24</sup>. The formats and schedules for Bible classes are very similar to the ones described earlier in this paper with Craig and Judy. Another thing the Bodes try to stress while there are family traditions. Since many of the girls come from dysfunctional backgrounds and have little good to say about their time at home, the house parents take time, especially around the holidays, to do things with them that functional families would do. They decorate cutout cookies. They make Christmas candies. They center their

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<sup>23</sup> The Bible Study course they use for all the residents is a Bible Study made for a maternity home. It is three sessions and spans about 30-35 weeks. It is a Bible study that has been "Lutheranized." Also, if a resident wishes to go further in her studies and is there longer than 30-35 weeks, Pastor Bode uses a longer course by Pastor Wayne Voigt. The course is called "Searching Scripture." To Pastor Bode's knowledge, only one resident has made it all the way through the "Searching Scripture" Bible Class.

<sup>24</sup> The Bode's shared this story in their interview: Another time we taught one little boy the song "Jesus loves me" and we sang it each night at dinner just because he would always request "my song". Later he went to visit his father in jail and sang to the father who was behind glass. The mother told us that there were tears streaming down the father's face. That same mother was the one who had not gone beyond 6<sup>th</sup> grade in her formal education. Her mother was going to home-school her but never got around to it. We have the policy that a GED or high school diploma must be pursued if they never got one. So we had been after her to get going. When she finally got her GED, we asked her why she had never gotten it before then. Her reply was simply that no one had ever pushed her before. This same girl then went on to start a challenging 2-year paralegal course of study. When she left here, she seemed to be doing well.

devotion time around the “Reason for the Season.”<sup>25</sup> They make a big deal out of birthdays and the like. They do all this with the hope that these traditions will continue in the homes that the girls make for themselves and their little ones after they leave *New Beginnings*.

The Bodes shared what Bible passages became sources of wisdom, encouragement and strength in their years at *New Beginnings*. They spoke about Romans 8:28,<sup>26</sup> Matthew 25:40,<sup>27</sup> and also Isaiah 41:10,<sup>28</sup> I Corinthians 10:13<sup>29</sup> and Luke 2.<sup>30</sup> They said that the main Bible passage of *New Beginnings* was John 3:16.<sup>31</sup> This is also the passage that is the caption for the painting of Jesus with the little children, a painting which hangs in each one of the resident’s apartments.

At *New Beginnings* some things change. The house parents, the residents, the facilities, and even the roof change,<sup>32</sup> but God’s work and the need for *New Beginnings* do not change. Every day the girls walk by a poster as they come into the dining room of *New Beginnings*. As they walk near the cross made in the tile on the floor they read these words off the poster: “New Beginnings: In Life What Sometimes Appears To Be The End Is Really A New Beginning.”

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<sup>25</sup> Jesus is always the reason for the season. Many of the residents grew up not knowing that. It is the house parents’ great privilege and joy to share that message of Jesus with the residents in all the things they do around *New Beginnings*.

<sup>26</sup> Romans 8:28 – NIV - “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”

<sup>27</sup> Matthew 25:40 – NIV - “The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’”

<sup>28</sup> Isaiah 41:10 –NIV - “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

<sup>29</sup> I Corinthians 10:13 – NIV - “No temptation has seized you except that which is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.”

<sup>30</sup> Luke 2 – NIV – The Christmas story. See the December 2003 issue of *Growing Branches*.

<sup>31</sup> John 3:16 – NIV – “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” This was “In keeping with NB’s stated emphasis on sharing Jesus.”

<sup>32</sup> Due to some severe snow storms in 2002, *New Beginnings* got a new roof.

Here is the dining room and the poster that hangs there on the wall:



In an article Pastor Bode wrote for *Growing Branches* in August of 2006, he said this,

*New Beginnings* becomes the setting where the Gospel seeds are planted and nourished in precious, blood-bought souls. Measured in those terms, the question “Is it really worth it?” loses a lot of steam, doesn’t it? As we, the house parents, look back on nearly six years at *New Beginnings*, and also look ahead to retirement, despite the difficulties and obstacles encountered along the way, we are grateful that God has used us in His seed-planting and –nourishing ‘business’ here at *New Beginnings – A Home for Mothers*. We thank all of you for your continual prayers and support!

The girls at *New Beginnings* truly are making a new beginning. It is the most important beginning because it is with Christ and his love. *New Beginnings*’ house parents have the opportunity and privilege of teaching that love of Christ day in and day out by devotions, classes, and example. God bless the house parents of *New Beginnings* and all the residents there as this ministry continues to make bridges into the hearts and lives of new mothers so that they meet their Savior Jesus, just like that woman next to Jacob’s well. Sometimes a whole town will hear about Jesus because one bridge was made. To God be the Glory!

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[www.ChristianLifeResources.com](http://www.ChristianLifeResources.com)

[www.HomeForMothers.com](http://www.HomeForMothers.com)



# Addenda

There are many more things not covered in this paper concerning the unique and not so unique aspects of the ministry at *New Beginnings* (the interview process for New Residents, adoption, the thrift store, premature babies, more inspiring stories, etc.). To get more information one may visit the website for Christian Life Resources at [www.ChristianLifeResources.com](http://www.ChristianLifeResources.com) or go directly to *New Beginnings*' own website, [www.HomeforMothers.com](http://www.HomeforMothers.com). The telephone for *New Beginnings* is 1-800-720-MOMS or 1-303-364-0890. The house parents are more than willing to speak with anyone interested in this wonderful ministry. The new house parents beginning in January of 2007 are Pastor Gary and Janice Schult. Please keep these house parents and this unique and vital ministry in your prayers and support. To God be the Glory!

In these addenda, one will find issues of *Growing Branches*, the newsletter of *New Beginnings* which the house parents and relief staff of *New Beginnings* put out quarterly.

These are the issues of *Growing Branches* which are located in the addenda:

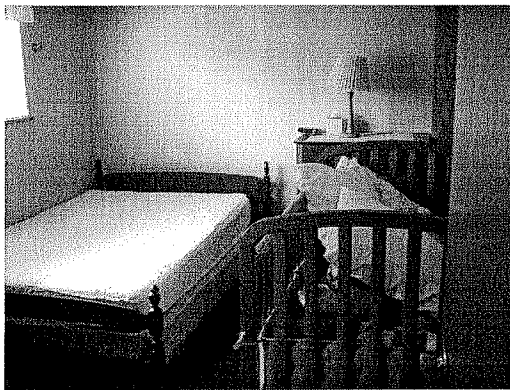
Fall 1996  
Summer 2000  
September 2002  
April 2003  
August 2003  
December 2003  
April 2004  
August 2004  
December 2004  
August 2005  
December 2005  
August 2006

To find more issues of *Growing Branches*, one may contact Christian Life Resources through their website. One may also see earlier issues of *Growing Branches* in the addenda of

Pastor Jeffrey A. Bonack's paper *New Beginnings – A Home for Mothers: from conception through its early years*, located in the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Library in Mequon, Wisconsin.

Also included in these addenda is a video that New Beginnings and Christian Life Resources put out called "*Building Bridges: Me, Mommy, and Jesus.*" There is also a printout of the current webpage of *New Beginnings* as well as a few additional fliers from *New Beginnings*.

Some pictures not included in the paper, but which may be interesting are these:



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<sup>33</sup> A bedroom, waiting for a new resident.

<sup>34</sup> The entrance to the Bode's apartment. Notice the sign, "Maternity Lane."

<sup>35</sup> A TV room, play room for the residents and their children.

<sup>36</sup> A bathroom of one of the apartments. Notice the toilet is white and the bathtub is pink. The pink toilet must have been the one removed by Pastor Ebert. ☺.